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Cosby Legal and Publicity Teams Opt for Silence After Admission Is Released

By GRAHAM BOWLEY and SYDNEY EMBER JULY 8, 2015

Since last fall, as more than two dozen women have come forward to accuse Bill Cosby of sexual assault, the star and his team of advisers have pursued an aggressive legal and media strategy.

But since Monday, when a newly released court record from 2005 showed that Mr. Cosby had admitted obtaining Quaaludes in the 1970s to give to young women with whom he wanted to have sex, he and his team have been uncharacteristically quiet.

A new civil action filed on Wednesday shows one possible reason.

Lawyers for the woman who accused Mr. Cosby in the 2005 case argued in the filing that the full deposition should be made public, saying that various pronouncements by the defense team over the last few months had violated the confidentiality agreement between Mr. Cosby and their client.

In fact, the lawyers said that as recently as this week Mr. Cosby's team had issued a statement to ABC News that damaged their client, Andrea Constand, who had accused Mr. Cosby of drugging and assaulting her. Ms. Constand's case was settled in 2006, and she has not spoken about it since.

On Wednesday, Mr. Cosby's advisers were denying any role in the

statement quoted by ABC News. Mr. Cosby's publicist, David Brokaw, said, "it did not come from me or anyone in the Cosby camp." Mr. Cosby and his lawyers have otherwise not commented on the unsealed document. ABC News declined to comment.

Dolores M. Troiani, one of the lawyers who filed the motion for sanctions in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, did not respond to requests for further comment. Mr. Cosby has never been charged with a crime and has repeatedly denied the sexual assault allegations. Yet after months — even years — of aggressive resistance from his advisers, the release of the 2005 deposition document appears to have increased the public credibility of his accusers, legal and public relations experts said.

And since Mr. Cosby is already facing a defamation lawsuit from three of his accusers, those experts said staying silent may now be his best strategy.

"There is no benefit in speaking out now, and there is a risk because anything he says now can be held against him," said Dan Hill, president of Ervin Hill Strategy, a crisis and reputation consultancy in Washington.

The 2005 case involved testimony by 13 unidentified women. In their filing, Ms. Constand's lawyers said they had sought permission from nine of the women to make the deposition public, and two of the women and a lawyer for two others said they had received requests from Ms. Constand's lawyers in emails on Tuesday.

Donna Motsinger and Kristina Ruehli — two of the 13 "Jane Doe" witnesses in the 2005 case — said on Wednesday that they had been contacted by Ms. Troiani's office for permission to unseal the deposition.

Both said they felt vindicated by Mr. Cosby's admission in the court record. They also said they fully supported unsealing the full deposition.

"I think more will come out," Ms. Motsinger said on Wednesday from her

home in New Mexico. “I think this is the tip of the iceberg. I think it’s a Pandora’s box.”

“There’s going to be more, and it’s going to strengthen the case against him,” she added.

Ms. Ruehli said, “In addition to being elated, vindicated and relieved, my reaction now is, Where does this go from here?”

As for how Mr. Cosby and his team could respond to the latest revelation, Mr. Hill said there was probably little they could do.

They could point out, for example, that Mr. Cosby did not admit to giving women Quaaludes without their consent, “but the court of public opinion has changed so much that no one is interested in a degree of defense anymore,” Mr. Hill said. “Unless he can say he didn’t do it, and here is proof, nothing works.”

Sara Brady, a public relations specialist based in Winter Park, Fla., said Mr. Cosby’s best option was probably to stay silent. His team will most likely be watching Mr. Cosby’s family members and close friends to make sure that no one speaks to the news media, and following anything his accusers might say.

“They will be monitoring all of the women who are being interviewed and weighing every word in hopes of having something to discredit them down the road,” she said.

She added they would also be watching in case this escalates into a criminal matter. The Los Angeles Police Department confirmed on Wednesday it had an open criminal investigation into a complaint of a sexual nature against Mr. Cosby by a woman.

Jack Richter, a spokesman for the police department, said California law prevented him from providing further details.

But he said the case had arisen after the complaint by the woman, and was not prompted by Monday's revelations.

Serge F. Kovalski contributed reporting. Susan Beachy contributed research.

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